



# FRED CLARK

*Serving Adams, Columbia, Marquette & Sauk Counties*

STATE REPRESENTATIVE ♦ 42ND ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

**Public Hearing**  
Committee on Education  
Tuesday, March 9, 2010  
10:00 am, Rm. 417N (GAR Hall)

## Testimony – AB 806 Consolidation Referenda Dates

Thank you Chair Pope-Roberts and members of the committee. I testify today in favor of AB 806, relating to the procedure for school district consolidations.

None of us wants to see schools consolidated, however the current fiscal environment for schools today makes it clear that more consolidations may very well occur. This legislation provides an increased measure of flexibility to districts navigating the many issues involved in consolidation.

Current law allows two or more school districts to order consolidation of their respective districts by a resolution ordering consolidation – which would take effect in July of the second year. However, a voter referendum is required to approve the consolidation if one or more of the boards orders it, or if a petition requesting a referendum is signed by 10% or more of the electors in any of the affected districts. Under current law, if a referendum is required, it can occur only during the November election, and if passed by all affected districts, it commits the districts to consolidation in July of the following year.

Although it is not required by current law, the reality for almost all districts is that a referendum will be required to affect consolidation. This bill allows school districts considering consolidations more flexibility in planning by allowing them to hold referenda in conjunction with either the April, September, or November elections. Offering two alternate timelines for referenda will allow districts additional time for planning, and more time for interim boards to be formed and make decisions on behalf of the future consolidated district.

In working with two of the districts I represent that are currently facing consolidation, it is clear that the process of bringing two separate entities with long proud traditions of independence and close associations with their communities together can be difficult and often controversial. Decision making can be difficult at best, and often progress can look like “two steps forward and one step back.”

Our goal in this legislation is simple – to provide as much flexibility as possible so that at least we are not hindering the process, and schools can do the best planning possible. I ask for your support today for this small piece of relief for both current and future schools facing the difficult prospect of consolidation.